Dear family members, dear representatives of the Association "Stones of Remembrance",

I would like to welcome you all to the opening of the first part of the 12th "Street of Remembrance" here in Leopoldstadt.

I am especially touched by the fact that you, dear family members, have taken such a long journey and expended such a great deal of effort to remember your parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins and other family members who have been deported and murdered by the Nazi regime.

“A person is only forgotten when their name is forgotten” – that is what it says in the Talmud, a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The project “Stones of Remembrance” ensures, that the victims of the Nazi regime get their names back. It shows that these people where once our neighbours, our friends or even our relatives. It also shows that they all lived here together.

In this commemorative year we get reminded of the events which happened here 80 years ago. Events which especially concerned our district the Leopoldstadt, which is also called “Mazzeinsel”, because it was the center of Jewish culture and Jewish life back then.

Fortunately, today our district is once again the one with the largest Jewish population, albeit much smaller, than before the terror of the Nazis. Of course this is also the district which has the most Jewish victims to mourn - victims whose memory we have come together here today to honor, whose lives, and suffering are in our thoughts today.

"Stones of Remembrance" is a project that inspires us to pause and be mindful. As we walk through the familiar streets and alleyways of Leopoldstadt, we suddenly gaze on stones with names and dates immortal - seeing them makes us "pause", remember that in this ruthless epoch people simply "disappeared" never to return.

Those people could simply disappear because the voice of reason got silenced in the fanatical “Hail Hitler” chants of the Austrian people.

Kofi Annan, the former UN – Secretary General once said: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is the silence of the majority”. That is why it is our duty to raise our voices and defend our society against any attempts to foster fear and hatred.

Currently we have a government coalition containing a party which is known to have members among them who are attracted to right wing extremist ideas; some of them are also district councilors here in the Leopoldstadt. Oskar Deutsch, the president of the Jewish community of Vienna, called them the successors of the predecessors of the Nazis.

Sadly, our Chancellor is turning a blind eye to his coalition partner and thereby making this kind of mindset socially acceptable, this is a first step in the wrong direction.

We are again in a defensive struggle in which we have to defend the hegemony over the interpretation of National Socialism as a crime – after we have laboriously won it before.

The Austrian Writer Michael Köhlmeier was invited to talk on the occasion of the act of remembrance against Violence and Racism of the Austrian Parliament. In his brilliant speech he told us” The humans never became evil in one step. There were a lot of small ones, each one too small for a major outcry. It starts with words, it leads into deeds.” I hope that our steps on the street of remembrance today help us counter the many little steps of evil.

In the 21st century, forgetting the Shoah is to be fought by all means: with education, with openness, with commitment. And I call upon each and every one of you to be mindful and brave, to stand up to injustice and forgetfulness, and to defend those that are persecuted for their religion, ethnicity, or political convictions.

At last I want to thank the representatives of the Association "Stones of Remembrance" for their relentless efforts and also all of you for walking with us today.

Thank you.